

I am writing in response to the proposed vaccine “passport” proposal that has been proposed for Montgomery County. I am fully vaccinated and boosted but remain opposed to this proposal for the following reasons:

1. It is an overreaction to the omicron variant situation which by most accounts will be a temporary phenomenon which may have already reached it's peak and is poised for an exponential decline.
2. It sets an unwise and perhaps dangerous precedent. Is this proposal going to serve as a gateway to expanded versions in the near future in which we will have to reveal more and more of our personal information and medical history to gain access to local businesses such as restaurants, pubs, gyms, etc.? For example, in the future will we have to show evidence of flu vaccines during the flu season? New York state is already planning to exploring how their Excelsior platform, developed as a Covid vaccine passport could be retrofitted to verify other types of records and credentials that the future for Montgomery County?
3. This proposal will require one to show proof of vaccination to enter a restaurant for less than a minute to pick up a take out order. Is that really necessary? It's almost as absurd as having to put on a mask to enter a restaurant for a short period to pick up a take out order while everyone dining in the restaurant is unmasked. Only politicians can think that these logic-defying situations make sense.
4. I understand that under the proposal the cards we received when we were vaccinated will serve as adequate proof. However, these cards are not convenient to carry around since they do not fit into most wallets. Also, having to carry them around increases the risk of losing them. I'm sure you will respond that one can use a digital photo of the card instead. But that response ignores the fact that that not everyone has or wants to own mobile computing devices. I personally do not own, or wish to own, one of those ridiculous electronic pacifiers which violate personal privacy as matter of design and are extremely prone to serious security issues.
5. I don't recall hearing anything about a sunset provision or off-ramp for this proposal when it outlives it usefulness (assuming, for the moment, that it is actually useful). As we've seen before, so-called “safety” measures adopted after 9/11 such as removing shoes at the airport have remained in place indefinitely even though most people consider them performative “security theater” rather than providing actual security against terrorism. I fear that these extreme Covid prevention proposals adopted by Montgomery County (e.g., mask mandates) are intended to never expire and will result in prolonging the dystopian existence we currently find ourselves in long after there is any reasonable justification for them.

In conclusion I see this proposal as a government overreach similar to to the overreactions to 9/11 that led to monstrosities such as the Patriot Act and other serious assaults on civil liberties. I urge the Council to reject, or at least, place sensible limitations on this proposal such as setting sunset provisions, regular review of the usefulness of this measure and exemptions for actions, such as picking up takeout orders, that do not require one to remain in a business establishment for longer than a few minutes. Phil Dagosto